"I would like to give you the love and duty of a son."

CHAPTER XVII.

"AY ME, THE DIFFERENCE I DISCERN."

As Hubert Holmes was lounging in the smoking-room of the *Water Witch*, there appeared in the doorway a face he knew, or had he mistaken a chance likeness? Surely the cloudy atmosphere of the room had caused—— No; he could scarcely mistake Smithers for another man, though they had met very seldom. The easy, frank expression and careless gait, almost boyish in their pleasing effect, could belong to no one else.

Hubert seemed turning to stone as he stared at the other, who flung himself on a seat and glanced carelessly around, then caught sight of Hubert.

With well-affected surprise he leaned quickly forward, ejaculating: "It can't be! Why—yes, to be sure it *is*. Mr. Holmes, this is a surprising and delightful rencontre," and he eagerly rose and held out his hand, which the Squire was too amazed to reject.

"I little thought," Smithers rattled on, "that we should meet so soon again, and like this, when we parted. Ah! that was a terrible business. I can seldom bear to think of it. I suppose your friend M. Dubourg is quite recovered now? Poor fellow! I should not like to change places with him."

By the time he finished that speech Hubert had recovered himself; but a smoking-cabin, where a number of men were collected, was not the place for such "talk" as must pass between the two; therefore he rose up and asked Smithers to come for a turn on the deck.

In gay good humour the other followed, talking all the time in his frank, easy manner; but noting carefully his companion's cold silence, and drawing inferences therefrom. When they reached a quiet part of the ship Holmes spoke.

"I have seen my friend M. Dubourg quite lately," he said, in a stern voice which in no way affected Smithers.

"I suppose so; and how does he look? Is he getting up his spirits? Gracious! I should never smile again if I had done what he did."

"My friend told me *all* that took place after I left. All! I know you, Mr. Smithers.

"Well, I did what little I could to make the poor fellow comfortable—as I told you I would. I wished I could have remained longer, but it was not safe——"

"Stop! That is more than enough. I tell you *I know you!* I know you for a villain of the deepest dye; the confederate of that Russian, the robber of a dead man——"

"Mr. Holmes, you must be mad! What monstrous mistake is this? Pray explain yourself, for I am quite confounded by your words." And really any person knowing the man as little as Hubert did, would, like Hubert, have been shaken in his convictions by the candid air which Smithers wore, his shocked expression, and grieved tone.

Hubert shortly repeated what Dubourg had told him.

"Well, I never!" the gambler exclaimed. "My dear Mr. Holmes, I don't know which to grieve most over—your credulity, or the black ingratitude of M. Dubourg. What snake-like ways those Frenchmen have, to be sure! But this beats everything I ever heard. And he told you I carried off everything! said he was ruined! Now what object in the world could he have for accusing me of such crime? Was it to excite your pity and sponge upon you for some of your winnings, eh?"

"I believed my friend, and have given him help," Hubert answered, in perfect bewilderment over this wholly unexpected turn of the tables.

"I am sorry for you," said Smithers, with the same cool audacity; "and I'm sorry you should have believed a beggarly Frenchman's accusations against your countryman—seeing I had given you no reason to doubt my truth. On the contrary, had proved my honesty and courage in a manner which convinced you on the spot."

"I do not know what to think," Hubert stammered. "I have known M. Dubourg for some time, in a casual way, and I had no reason to doubt him—none. Indeed, when I recall our last interview, I feel it would be shameful to doubt him; and yet——" He looked into the handsome face which was gazing straightforwardly at him, and felt unable to declare Smithers a traitor, notwithstanding Dubourg's statement that he was a swindler and a thief.

"I own," said the impostor, "that it was natural you should believe the man who had been your associate, rather than myself—a stranger; but I hope my plain denial of such a horrible charge—so un-English all round—has convinced you that I did not deserve to be so charged. There! let us drop the subject. I never care to dwell more than a few minutes on disagreeable themes. Suppose we go back to the smoking-room and have a quiet game of backgammon or nap? any mild thing of the sort to wile away the time."

"No," Hubert answered, shortly. "I promised to bring Mrs. Holmes up for a walk when the heat was less oppressive. I think she will come now."

And away he went, leaving Smithers to think what he pleased. That personage lingered where the Squire left him, expecting the couple to come on deck, but they did not; and after a long interval, which seemed to show that they meant to remain below, Smithers returned to the smoking-room, and was soon engaged at a mild and orthodox rubber of whist—shilling points.

Holmes had not gone to find Sallie in the ladies' saloon, but had retired to his cabin to think over the "situation." The more he pondered the more confused became his judgment. At one moment he felt sure Dubourg had told the truth; from another point of view it seemed that Smithers had been maligned. On the whole, he began to believe that the latter's story was the more consistent, and the more likely to be true. In either case *he* had been nothing more than a credulous, hood-winked fool, and it was humiliating to have to own that to himself. "Anyhow," he resolved, "I'll be on my guard against the fellow. It was a most unlucky chance that sent him on board this ship! Even if I believed what Dubourg told me, what could I do to this man? Nothing. To denounce him is to bring down the law on Dubourg. I have no proof against Smithers; and indeed, my having given Dubourg that money makes me one with *him*. I don't know what to think—

'Oh, what a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive!'

There never was a truer saying than that. I'd have been wiser, happier, if I had just remained on the spot, told the truth, and trusted Dubourg to the clemency of justice. I really don't believe now that it would have gone hard with him. If I remember right—but it was all so hurried and confused—he was wounded before the Baron fell. Yes; he got the bullet intended for me. I could have explained it all if I had remained; but they over-persuaded me, and, like a fool, an unmitigated fool, I fled."

The Squire's retrospective musings were by no means pleasant, and caused him the most poignant regret. Regret is ever the most bitter part of repentance. His head ached with the pain of his heart, and it was with the utmost difficulty that Sallie, finding him in low spirits, coaxed him to come on deck with her. He glanced anxiously around for Smithers, but not seeing him, felt relieved enough to chat at ease for a short time.

By-and-by he left his wife to the society of some ladies and retreated once more below, and it was while he remained there in his cabin that Smithers introduced himself to Mrs. Holmes.

She had required to move her deck-chair, and quite naturally he—standing near—offered his services. Then, in his frank way, that seemed so much a part of the man, he said: "I think you are Mrs. Holmes. I know Mr. Holmes. I have met him now and then, and I was delighted to find him on board."

They soon fell into pleasant, friendly conversation, which was prolonged until Hubert re-appeared.

His chagrin may be better imagined than described at beholding Smithers chatting gaily to Sallie, and if there had been any way of shaking himself and her free from the man he would have done so at once.

But Hubert was powerless, and could only join in the talk in a constrained manner, which his wife attributed to the headache.

It was not till the next day, when it became obvious that Smithers meant to attach himself to them, that Holmes found an opportunity of warning Sallie.

"I don't like the fellow," he said emphatically, when she expressed commendation. "I quite allow that he has nice manners, and an open, generous way that is very taking; but all the same I don't like him. I may be prejudiced, still I've heard that of him which should make me avoid, nay, hate and despise him, if it's true. It may be false, and I may be wronging the fellow, still I don't want his company, and I don't want you to encourage the acquaintance; and moreover—I may as well tell you at once—his name is Smithers, and he is the man who was with us that night, you know. At that time I believed him to be as honest as myself, but I've had reason to change my opinions since, at least to entertain doubts of him."

Of course that was enough for Sallie. She asked no questions of her husband, and she showed no discourtesy to Smithers; but she contrived to keep him from falling into familiar acquaintance.

It was not easy to do with a man of his sort, and many times Sallie questioned herself, was not Hubert prejudiced or misinformed? There was so much genial good nature and open confidingness about Smithers, that he was a universal favourite on board the *Water Witch*.

If the Squire had still been addicted to gambling, and had joined the select parties that were formed in quiet corners or private cabins, he would soon have discovered that Smithers went in for something more than shilling points at whist; that Smithers worked upon the late Baron's system; that Smithers was always a winner; that Smithers carried a very keen observation and a cautious coolness, underneath his impulsive, careless demeanour.

The truth of M. Dubourg's accusations would have become apparent, and Hubert would have been put most thoroughly on his guard.

Unfortunately the reserve he practised prevented him from making important observations, and when they reached their destination they had no pretence for "cutting" Smithers, who, seemingly unconscious of any coldness on their part, said, as he bade good-bye, "I'll be sure and call upon you soon. I shall be anxious to know how Mrs. Holmes stands the climate, and if you are likely to settle down—though I suppose that's certain," and he glanced at Roy and Ben Linton standing one on each side of Sallie. They had come on board to meet and welcome the travellers, and Sallie felt as if a lifetime of trouble had rolled from her heart as she felt the clasp of her "baby's" loving arms and looked into the trusty, manful face of Roy.

She was so glad at that moment that fancying she saw a look of sadness sweep over Smithers's face, and knowing that he was there a stranger, with none to welcome him, she said to him, "This is my brother, Mr. Linton. He has been here some years, and can perhaps direct you—if you have no friends."

To be sure Smithers had no friends in Cape Town; and Roy, with the friendly warmth of colonial folk, said he should be delighted to help the stranger, directed him to a good hotel, and promised to call upon him at an early opportunity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"A LIFELONG TRACT OF TIME REVEALED."

"I DARESAY Mr. Holmes will learn his work in time, but any fool can see he never did business before. However, I'm not the man to be hard on a fellow who's down and wants to raise himself; no! no! Linton was very honest, too, in telling me that your brother-in-law had not had a business training, and had wasted a good patrimony, but was anxious to retrieve. That was fair and above-board, just what I should expect from Linton, and I'll give Holmes every chance. I like your sister; she is just the sweet sort of woman that makes feather-headed fellows into sober, well-doing men. Yes, I like her, but, boy, I like you best of all, and I'm positively jealous of Mrs. Holmes. She monopolises all your leisure time, which comes hard on an old chap, living alone, who had begun to count upon his chat of an evening with you."

Thus old Mr. Walker to Ben, who answered, "I am very sorry indeed. I had not imagined you would miss me, and it has been *such* a pleasure having Sallie."

"Humph! of course, a pretty, kind sister is pleasanter company than a rough old chap—of course, Ben."

"Ah, don't put it so, please, sir," Ben begged. "I do like your society, and you have been so very, very good to me that I should be most ungrateful if——"

"Tuts! don't say more about it. Now you promised once to tell me all about yourself and this 'Mam-lee,' as I hear you call Mrs. Holmes. A nice name! I suppose it's a sort of baby-mixture of mamma and Sallie; babies have odd ways of expressing themselves, but often their words explain things better than ours. There was a—baby who mixed his mother's names as you did your sister's. *She* was called Ettie, and her boy called her 'Ma-mettie—Ma-mettie.'"

He suddenly turned his face from Ben, and there was a long pause which the lad felt it would not be well for him to break.

By-and-by Mr. Walker said abruptly, and without looking round, "Go on, boy; you promised to tell me all about your early days. I am curious to learn what made you a God-fearing youth. What has kept you good and pure?"

Instinctively Ben felt that it would be right in him to respond most confidentially to the old man's wish. In spite of his rough exterior, the old man had the honourable feelings of a gentleman, the kindliness of a parent; and to him Ben gave without reserve the simple story of his boyhood as we know it. And as the Silver flowed through the hills and meadows of Wately, so through his narrative flowed the early dream of childhood, giving life, beauty, cohesion to all his aims and actions. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." That had been Ben's life-motto since the hour when his tender young sister carried him in her arms across the well-known river in far-distant England. That was the golden thread which twined around every aspiration, which had given his character strength and nobility far beyond what it derived from other sources. Sallie had sown the seed of Christ's law in the child-heart of her "baby," and she was to reap the full harvest thereof ere many days.

The listener to Ben's story seldom interrupted it with words, but his frequent nods and rarely asked, pointed questions showed how deeply he was interested. When the

lad touched upon Sallie's exile from her beautiful home, and his resolution to win it back for her, he was careful to avoid speaking harshly of the Squire, and he gave no hint as to the manner in which the estates of Wately had become burdened; therefore he was somewhat astonished when old Walker asked quickly—

"Ben, boy, did you ever play for money—gamble? Do you look upon that as a sin?"

"I never played for money; Sis taught us all to consider that a sin," Ben answered gravely, and Mr. Walker nodded.

"Go on," he said. "You were saying you meant to set this Mam-lee, this queen of yours, back on her throne as the great lady of Wately. Why, boy, do you know how young you are, how fair and slim, and unused to jostle men, ay, and trample them down in the race for fortune? It will take you a lifetime to save as much money as that feather-headed Squire gamed away in a few years. Yes, gamed. That's how it went, I know. At cards, or on the turf, or the Stock Exchange; all one! all one! He has not been a drinking man, nor an inventive visionary, concocting all manner of machines that won't work, and spending thousands on patents that won't pay. Oh, I know, he's been a gambler! I've seen it in the way he counts up figures, and jumps to conclusions about the run of chances, and the like."

Ben had no answer ready, and his companion went on—

"I am not squeezing secrets out of you, my boy. I guessed this very soon after Mr. Holmes came here; I knew, I knew."

Then for want of anything else to say, the lad remarked—

"You are very observant, Mr. Walker. I dare say you have known men who do that sort of thing."

The poor old man's head dropped suddenly.

"God help me!" he groaned; "I *have* known such."

"I am very sorry. I fear I have pained you by my heedless words," Ben said gently, and feeling deeply for the other's distress.

"Never mind! never mind! You could not know, boy." Then recovering himself, he added, "There! this talk has done me good. Now I'll just return your confidence by telling you a bit about myself, and after this we'll take no notice of it, only you'll understand some things better when I've done. I've told you and your brother that I had a boy of my own—once. It is many years ago. He would have been older than Roy, and my—— You are like what he was—the same hair and eyes, and gentle manner. But you have what my poor lad lacked—religious principle; without that he was unarmed; *that's* what has kept you good and pure—the holy lessons of a Christian woman! I did not get them, and my boy did not get them. Mothers! mothers! it is you—mothers—who mould men for good or evil. Ben, I tell you, you'd not be the good lad you are but for the teaching of that sister-mother of yours."

"I am conscious of that," Ben said, as Mr. Walker paused; "yet God has many ways of reaching boys' hearts. I know boys who have no mothers, or mothers without religion, and they are *Christian* boys."

"All the same," retorted the old man almost testily, "mothers are the natural, proper channel through which Christ's law should come to men, and things go all topsy-turvy when they happen otherwise."

A pause, then more gently he resumed—

"I don't know how my boy got into bad company and contracted a passion for gambling. I was engrossed with business. I gave him what he asked, a liberal allowance. I had no conception of the course he was on till—I saw him—dead! Dead, Ben!—my only boy—with a bullet-hole, the result of his own action, half covered by the fair curls on his temple! This happened years ago, and I can speak of it—but you see how it unmans me. Why have I repeated it? Because I want to impress *you* with the utmost horror of gambling. When I guessed the cause of your Squire's downfall, I knew that not even your sister's influence had been enough to make him pause in time. I fear his present effort may end in failure, for gambling is a passion that, once contracted, is seldom conquered. I have told you about my poor lad, because I wanted to terrify you from being inadvertently led into sin. There's that other man, Smithers. I know you have wondered at my getting acquainted with him, and I've seen Holmes look worried about it. Holmes is afraid I may let myself be plucked by a carrion crow of that sort! No fear! I know the fellow! I've tracked him to the gaming-tables. I know the kind of acquaintance he had with your brother-in-law, and I'll just tell you, boy. Holmes has risen a good bit in my estimation since I observed his anxiety to prevent my becoming intimate with Smithers. There, now, I've told you all I had a mind to, and I hope our talk has been good for both of us."

"It has been good for me, I know," said Ben warmly.

Then, with his loving young heart full of compassion, he went near and laid his hand caressingly on Mr. Walker's shoulder, saying, in the melodious voice that had already endeared itself to the childless, lonely man, "I wish I could comfort you. I would like to give you the love and duty of a son."

"Thank you—my—son," was the answer, spoken in grateful tones of deep emotion; and so they settled it.

A day or two later Mr. Walker said to Sallie, jocosely, but with a certain exultation in his voice—

"Look here, madam; I give you leave to call that boy 'baby' as often as you please—though he is less a baby in brains than any one of us—but you will please to note that your baby is *my son!* He is consigned to me by his own free gift. We won't quarrel about him as long as you don't encroach upon my rights; but if you do, madam, there will be war between us! By the way" (wheeling about on Hubert, who was standing near), "can you tell me, Holmes, what that man Smithers is doing in Cape Town? He has no business to do, evidently. He seems a gentleman of fortune. He has no friends here, and he doesn't seem to be anything of a sportsman, scientist, traveller; what in the world *is* he here for?"

"I know as little as you do, Mr. Walker," Hubert answered uneasily. "I knew him only in the most casual manner before we came here. He has rather attached himself to us since; but I don't know him so intimately as appears. In fact, I don't take to Smithers as most people do."

He stopped short there. He could not bear to create a prejudice against the man when he was not there to defend himself; yet he could as little bear to think that in consequence of his acquaintance with Smithers an honest friend, who was giving him the most efficient aid, might be injured.

"I like to get to the bottom of things," said the old gentleman. "I like to find out the whys and wherefores. What do *you* think, Mrs. Holmes? Ladies often jump to wise conclusions long before our brains have reached the same through reasoning. Have you any theory why Mr. Smithers came here and stays here, eh?"

"I fancy," said Sallie, with a smile, "that he is one of those lively, careless men who have enough fortune to keep them idle, and not enough to settle into sensible family men with. And I think he just goes about the world amusing

himself, and never thinking earnestly about anything." The smile left her face then, and she added, with a sigh, "People of that sort *seem* to lead a harmless life, but I fear they do a good deal of mischief. They teach others to idle, for one thing. Then there is a kind of prettiness, a sort of attraction about them which blinds one to the selfishness of such an existence. But, dear me! I did not mean to be severe on poor Mr. Smithers. I fear I have been led to express myself rather too harshly."

"Not at all! not at all! I quite agree with you," replied Mr. Walker, nodding his head to give emphasis to his words. "But, dear madam, your explanation, sensible as no doubt it is, doesn't satisfy me. However light, careless, impulsive, feathery (anything heedless you please to name it) a man may be, still his unpremeditated actions must proceed from *something*, no matter how trivial. Now I want to discover what trifling circumstance led Mr. Smithers to ship himself off in the *Water Witch* for a place he had not one interest in, and no motive for visiting."

While Mr. Walker was speaking Hubert's face was growing more and more concerned, and before his chief departed he asked, "May I call upon you this evening, Mr. Walker? I wish to speak to you in private."

"Come by all means," was the ready answer; and then the old man went off, chuckling to himself.

(To be continued.)

A LAST POEM.

[*Written four days before the author's death.*]

FATHER, I scarcely dare to pray,
So clear I see, now it is done,
That I have wasted half my day,
And left my work but just begun.

So clear I see that things I thought
Were right or harmless were a sin;
So clear I see that I have sought,
Unconscious, selfish aims to win;

So clear I see that I have hurt
The souls I might have helped to save,
That I have slothful been, inert,
Deaf to the calls Thy leaders gave.

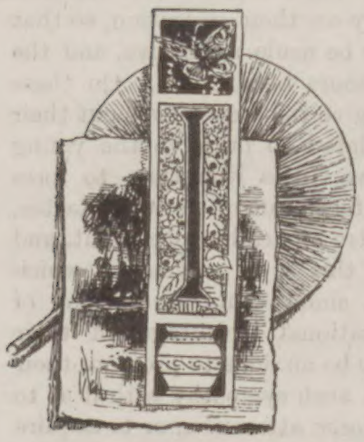
In outskirts of Thy kingdom vast,
Father, the humblest spot give me;
Set me the lowliest task Thou hast,
Let me, repentant, work for Thee!

HELEN JACKSON.

THE NATIONAL HOME-READING UNION.

A MOVEMENT FOR ENRICHING AND ELEVATING FAMILY LIFE.

BY BENJAMIN CLARKE.



IN the educational revival of the last twenty years, nothing has been more remarkable than the inclusion of the gentler sex in the onward movement. Not only has there been an earnest realisation that the education open to girls in secondary schools needed radical improvement, but there has been an intellectual quickening among women, which has developed an attention to all kinds of questions affecting not only the welfare of the home, but the social condition of society, in which hitherto only a few of the sex took any interest. This determination of women to claim for their daughters a wider and a fuller education has had a broadening effect on their own minds. The very contact with this wider education which was denied them has stirred their intellectual activities, and has made them feel that if the training of the schools had come too late for them the text-books were still open to them, and the wider culture which an intelligent interest in all sorts of subjects vital to the well-being of the home and society would not fail to impart.

This higher education of women will do much to raise the intellectual tone of the household; for it will supply topics of the greatest importance and of the liveliest interest for discussion and conversation.

It will greatly depend on the mothers of to-day to what extent the educational forces now existent are brought to bear in the elevation of the household.

Any movement, therefore, which tends to mental improvement, to raise the intellectual tone of the home, to create there a purer, wiser, and more elevating atmosphere, should have the hearty support of mothers.

And again, the tendency of society is to multiply engagements which take its members away from home. The Church, society, recreation, all present their attractions which allure us away from the family circle, and rob us of much of that quiet, restful occupation and leisure which made the homes of earlier days not only so pleasant, but so influential for good.

Without desiring to join a crusade to resist the centrifugal forces of society, we shall, if we be wise, hail any fresh and useful means, which will make the home the centre of intellectual, as well as social companionships, and which may make it more enjoyable and elevating for our relatives and friends.

Just such a movement has been launched, under the title of The National Home-Reading Union. It has had its first Summer Assembly at Blackpool, where it was inaugurated by an excellent address by Professor Stuart, M.P. Com-

mencing on July 16th, it continued its daily sessions until the 26th, providing courses of lectures on Economics by Professor J. E. Symes, of Nottingham, on the Study of Shakespeare, by Mr. J. Churton Collins, on the Study of Vocal Music, by Mr. Frank Sharp, of Dundee, on Lancashire Folk Lore, by Mr. W. E. A. Axon, of Manchester, besides individual lectures by Professor G. F. Browne, Dr. Courtney S. Kenny, Professor T. W. Rhys Davids, the Master of Downing College, Dr. J. G. Fitch, Mr. Joseph Proudman, Dr. C. W. Kimmins, of Downing College, Dr. R. D. Roberts, of Clare College, Professor W. F. Barrett, of Dublin, Dr. T. J. Lawrence, of Cambridge, Rev. H. R. Haweis, and Dr. Murray, of dictionary fame. There was an Evening Reception and Conversazione at the Winter Gardens at the beginning of the Assembly, and a Garden Party and Conversazione at the close, and other entertainments were provided. On the Sunday Archdeacon Farrar, Dr. Macfadyen, of Manchester, and other ministers preached, and the afternoon was devoted specially to Sunday-school teachers and scholars.

Several hundreds of people of both sexes and various ages availed themselves of these educational advantages, and of the pleasant gatherings and social companionships thus afforded; and though the visitors were mainly from the county itself, there were not wanting representatives of the southern counties. This new movement, based on the Chautauqua Assembly of New York State, which has been so successful, and which has given rise to so many other similar assemblies in the States, is intended to be the focus, or rallying-point of the National Home Reading Union. Out of the Chautauqua gathering has grown the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, which is a great organisation providing courses of home reading, and which now has a membership of over 100,000; mainly, of course, throughout the States, but, to some extent, in all English-speaking countries. Among the educated classes of Japan, who all learn English, there are some 2,000 members of this C.L.S.C., as it is called—Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle.

The objects of the National Home Reading Union may best be defined in the words of its prospectus:—

THE NATIONAL HOME READING UNION has been formed for the purpose of developing a tast for Recreative and Instructive Reading among all classes of the community, and directing Home Study to definite ends, so as on the one hand to check the spread of pernicious literature among the young, and on the other to remedy the waste of energy and lack of purpose so often found among those who have time and opportunity for a considerable amount of reading. Its objects are—

I.—To draw up and publish courses of reading adapted to the tastes and requirements of different classes of readers, especially (*a*) Young People, (*b*) Artisans, (*c*) General Readers.

II.—To publish for each class of readers a cheap monthly Magazine, giving introductions to the prescribed books, answers to questions, and other helps. The readers will be organised, as far as possible, into Local Circles under suitable Leaders; Certificates will be issued to those who have completed regular courses of study; and such further assistance as experience shows to be practicable will be rendered.

III.—To organise Summer Assemblies at convenient centres, when Lectures will be delivered by experienced teachers. Social Gatherings will be held and Excursions arranged.

THE FIRST READING SEASON WILL COMMENCE IN OCTOBER, 1889.

Under each of the three sections mentioned in I. there are Reading Courses, which have been selected with great care, and after consultation with professors, heads of families, schoolmasters and mistresses. The terms for membership are very moderate: for the Young People's Section, one shilling; for the Artisan's Section, one shilling and sixpence, and for the General Readers' Section, three shillings. The books required to be read have been chosen with a regard to their inexpensiveness, especially in sections (*a*) and (*b*); and it is hoped that the Council will be able to make special arrangements of a favourable character with publishers.

This Council is a widely chosen and representative one, of which Dr. Percival, Head Master of Rugby, is Chairman, and Dr. Paton, of Nottingham, is Honorary Secretary. It is to the last-named gentleman, who is so deeply interested in all that concerns the moral and educational elevation of society, that this movement owes its origin. The Provisional Secretary is the Rev. T. J. Lawrence, M.A., LL.D., Brunswick Lodge, Cambridge, who will be happy to forward circulars or afford any information that may be desired. As a matter of courtesy, it might be well to enclose a stamped and addressed envelope.

This Reading Union, so happily conceived, so heartily supported by educationists, ministers of various denominations and others, and so favourably inaugurated at Blackpool, offers an admirable opportunity for young people still at school to enter upon a useful, stimulative, and interesting course of reading, which may go far to fix good mental habits, and form a taste, at a critical period of their lives, for sound, improving literature. It offers a leading and a guiding hand to those who have left school, and who may have some desire to carry on their education, so that the pursuit of knowledge may be made attractive, and the wise employment of leisure hours be fostered. On these grounds alone, mothers should give this new movement their heartiest support. It is calculated to preserve the young from the demoralisation of worthless literature, to form studious habits, to lead to the formation of elevating tastes, and to make the home the centre of bright, intelligent, and ennobling attractions. But this is a movement which mothers, for their own sake, should support. Many of them have not had the educational advantages of their children; and though they may be anxious to promote their fuller training, they are not in such sympathy with it as to be able to make it a bond of closer attraction, or to acquire from it topics of conversation and discussion. Without any desire to disparage, or without any suspicion of disrespect, it is not well that young people should feel that their parents are living on a lower intellectual plane. Now here comes the opportunity, not only for self-improvement, but for raising the whole tone of the home-circle. The courses of reading will supply topics for conversation, occasions for exchange of thought, banishing from the home circle much that is vapid and frivolous, and linking parents and children closer together in the bonds of an elevating companionship.

IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH.

BY EDITH A. BARNETT,

Joint-Author of "Our Nurses."

PART IV.—RHEUMATISM.

WE are well accustomed to speak of our ailments as rheumatic. I wonder how many of the speakers attach any precise meaning to the word. They appear to think that rheumatic means painful, and that it may be suitably used to characterise any pain in any part of the body not obviously occasioned by a wound or sore. Rheumatic comes from the Greek *rheo* signifying to flow. We find the same root in the French *s'enrhumer*, and it has underlying it the idea of some unusual flow or secretion of fluid. Rheumatism is of many kinds, and attacks many parts of the body. We talk of articular rheumatism, of rheumatic gout, rheumatic fever, and so on. Each of these complaints has some feature not found in the rest, and it is a matter of daily experience that what suits one rheumatic patient does not always benefit another. But one feature they all have in common. Some change takes place in the secretions, so that they contain a something that the body cannot use, and this unused material is liable to be deposited in the limbs or organs, where it becomes a source of discomfort or harm. "Chalkstones" in the joints, thickening of the membrane in the ear, stiffness of the limbs, gravel, stone, are every-day troubles belonging to the numerous family and allies of rheumatism. In one way it is fortunate that they are not hidden complaints. Those who belong to a rheumatic family are sure to know it, and it becomes all the easier for them to take precautions in time, and especially as there are few complaints that can so successfully be warded off by suitable means of defence.

First comes the question of diet. I said just above that in rheumatism the secretions contain material that cannot be used, and that is therefore deposited in various parts of the body. From whence came the said material originally? Without doubt, from food eaten; for our bodies, and all that is in them, can be formed no other way. Something is eaten that cannot be assimilated. One of the simplest rules of ethics is, Never give what will be made a bad use of. It must be applied here. Sometimes because they know no better, sometimes for want of self-control, rheumatic persons make a practice of eating the very foods that do them most harm. Hard water, containing chalk-lime and other minerals, is obviously injurious. Food, especially animal food, in any quantity more than the digestive and excretory organs can effectually dispose of, is also certain to increase the mischief. So is any food that produces acid dyspepsia, sugar and sweetmeats, for instance. Alcohol is bad because it retards the rapid changes in the human body which it is our object to promote. Of all forms of alcohol, beer and the stronger wines seem to be most harmful. Mineral acids combine with the superfluous secretion to form insoluble compounds. Vegetable acids, on the contrary, especially as found in fresh fruits and vegetables, can scarcely be taken too freely, especially during the summer season.

It is the best of all preventive treatment for the children of a rheumatic or gouty family, to bring them up to prefer the simplest food; to consider fruit and vegetables as necessaries, and meat as a luxury of life; to drink water with pleasure and alcohol not at all; to eat sugar sparingly. When once tastes and habits are formed, they cannot be altered without discomfort, or even danger. Many invalids make themselves miserable, and not a few become ill, in the effort to conform to rigid rules of diet that contradict all the habits of a lifetime. It is a grand thing to learn in childhood to prefer what is best for us.

Suppose that we do not succeed, in spite of most careful diet, in preventing altogether the secretion of useless material; then our next effort must be directed towards getting it carried away, instead of allowing it to be deposited in the body. Rheumatic people must keep all their excretory organs in active working order. As a rule, some sluggishness of one or all of these organs accompanies a tendency to rheumatism. Rheumatic persons often are troubled with constipation, and if they are foolish enough to have recourse to drugs, their condition goes from bad to worse, and greatly increases the likelihood of rheumatic attacks. The drugs must be given up, and a resolute endeavour must be made to overcome the bad habit—for constipation is the result of bad habits more often than anything else. The vegetable diet that is good for rheumatism will help. So will draughts of cold water the last thing at night and the first in the morning. Friction over the body is useful, or any simple system of movements or gymnastics that bring the abdominal muscles into play. With children it is wise to insist on punctual daily habits of attending to the bodily wants, for during youth the habits of the lifetime are formed, and they are often formed amiss from sheer ignorance and neglect, and want of timely warning.

The skin of rheumatic persons is often hard and dry, and acts imperfectly. Sometimes this local weakness shows itself in skin affections, such as psoriasis or eczema, which often appears when a rheumatic attack is passing away, or as a chronic complaint in some member of a rheumatic family. To keep the skin in good order is one of the first hygienic rules; perhaps it is *the* first in dealing with the rheumatic diathesis. A lifelong habit of copious washing is probably rarer than we care to believe. Hot baths suit best in some cases, cold in others. Good soap, not very strongly alkaline, is a necessity for all. Friction is always beneficial; anointing with olive or other oil often so. And it must never be forgotten that the condition of the outer skin of the body closely corresponds with that of the inner, and that if the digestion is in bad order the skin is generally quick to show it.

The condition of the kidneys is also very important, and often much neglected. On the first premonitory symptoms of a rheumatic attack, the best thing is to drink copiously of some warm drink, preferably water or lemonade, which will speedily be absorbed by the kidneys and will pass away into the bladder, carrying with it (so one hopes) the noxious

secretion out of the body. Alcoholic drinks do harm instead of good. A habit of drinking much soft water, or distilled water if it can be obtained, is often of great service; distilled water having great power of dissolving chalky substances in or out of the body.

Rheumatic fever and acute rheumatism are serious complaints, not to be treated without a doctor. On account of the violent perspirations that accompany rheumatic fever, and the extreme difficulty of moving the patient, it is usual and beneficial to make up the bed with blankets instead of sheets, and the joints and parts affected are generally wrapped in cotton-wool, both to induce and to absorb perspiration. The wool can be changed piecemeal when it would be impossible to remove a nightshirt.

One of the most dreaded consequences of rheumatic fever is the thickening of the membranes throughout the body, and especially of the membranes surrounding the heart. Traces of this mischief are often left for a lifetime, so that a doctor sounding a patient's heart can guess if he has had rheumatic fever or not. Sometimes this thickening so far hinders the heart's action that it amounts to what is known as valvular disease of the heart. Therefore, during a long convalescence the patient must be guarded against any sudden strain or shock. Gentle exercise is good for him, but he must not run or hurry, or do anything that increases the action of the heart suddenly or unduly. Rheumatic fever, unlike the infectious fevers, is liable to repeat itself, and it is so serious a disorder that no pains or trouble should be spared to prevent any chill or symptoms of a bad cold from developing themselves into a second attack.

To people who suffer from chronic rheumatism, the place they live in is all-important, the soil, and the water they drink. It has been repeatedly shown by the death-rate of various towns that rheumatism, as well as consumption, is less prevalent on pervious soils and on high-lying ground, and that these diseases disappear when the soil is thoroughly drained. It is worth any effort to a rheumatic person or family to live in a dry house, over gravel or sand, on the slope of a hill, where the water is pure and soft. No outward conditions develop the rheumatic tendency with the certainty and rapidity of damp. Even when it is impossible to change a neighbourhood for the better, it may be possible to change a house. And, notwithstanding the difficulty of getting stiff limbs up and down stairs, rheumatic persons must never sleep on the ground floor.

Now I have come to an end, not of material, but of space. It would be easy to continue this series of articles, and to write of other large and troublesome families of disease. Possibly, were I to do so, my main purpose would show itself more clearly, so that it might not be necessary for me to say in so many words that in the physical, as well as in the moral world, evil and tendencies to evil can only be overcome by wise training from babyhood. For faults of character, as well as of constitution, violent corrective measures may sometimes be necessary, but they will not wipe the scars and spots from either mind or body. At the best, perhaps, they serve to pull a man up short and to give him time to pause, until the forces of nature and of right try their power once more.

KATHERINE'S FAULT.

BY LINA ORMAN COOPER,

Author of "Marjorie's Mistress," etc.

"OH, mother! such a kind invitation from old Miss Garnett! Just listen," and Katherine Bailey, with a flushed, excited face, and in eager, tremulous tones, read the note she held in her hand.

Such a kind invitation, indeed! A proposal to her young friend to join her in a tour to the Italian lakes.

"It will give me great pleasure to have you, my dear, and I leave you until Monday to decide on your answer. We shall be away a full twelvemonth, during which time you can perfect yourself in music."

"Oh, jolly!" quoth Harold, as he listened. "A chance for you, Lady Kate. If only you can make up your big mind in time!"

Katherine looked scornfully at the speaker, but in a moment turned away to a fresh perusal of the old-fashioned letter. "I should like it ever so much, mother. But——"

"Perhaps you do not care about leaving home for so long, dear?" suggested Mrs. Bailey, in answer to that hesitating "but."

"It is a long time, ma'amsey," answered her daughter, though her cheeks burned a deeper crimson as she realised how little the thought of *home* had suggested the conjunction or caused her hesitation.

"I should wish you to go, Katie. However, you must please yourself, child."

Mrs. Bailey soon after quitted the room, leaving Katherine to think over her decision. She was surely old enough to know her own mind, and yet the perplexed face, propped on the white, plump hands, looked very young and vacillating. An hour afterwards Mrs. Bailey peeped in to find her daughter nearly in the same position, and wearing the same puzzled expression.

"Not decided yet, Katie? Well, you have all to-day and to-morrow, so you have plenty of time. Come now, to your day's work, dear."

Katherine rose willingly. Any task was better than trying to make up her own mind, and, to give the girl her due, she was always ready enough to do her duty when she was convinced the call had come. Her great fault was want of steadiness of purpose. She never was quite sure what she wished to do, or what she ought to do. This fault of Katherine's often came between her and happiness, and caused, besides, a great deal of inconvenience to those around her. You could never be sure of her. One minute she would eagerly be assenting to a proposition; at another, throwing cold water on the plan.

Her father, a well-to-do merchant, put it down to "nature" rather than to a direct failing in herself. Her more sensible, far-seeing mother, mourned over her inconstancy as a "sin."

"Royal's letters were not what they once were." p. 138.

She often urged Katherine to put herself under God's guidance and to do what was *right*, instead of being always swayed by her feelings. In vain she had tried to impress upon her daughter that the warning addressed to Reuben might sadly be applied to her—"Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." Katherine could no more make up her mind to be *entirely* God's servant than she could determine her smallest actions. At one moment she would feel inclined to make him Her choice. At another, some argument was urged in plea of putting off the day of decision.

"Till Monday," Miss Garnett said, but after all her thinking, that morning found her still undecided. "Miss Garnett is such a fussy, prosy old maid," she said to herself. "She will expect me to wait on her like a servant. It would be splendid to see Italy. But——"

At twelve o'clock Miss Garnett herself called for the answer. A bright, quick-mannered little person, with keen, grey eyes, and energetic movements.

"Well, are you coming, my dear?" she exclaimed, looking admiringly at the neat, trim figure and winsome face.

Miss Garnett had only known Katherine for a few weeks, but had been greatly taken by the girl's sweet looks and winning ways.

"Thank you, Miss Garnett so much. But——"

Ah, Katherine! you had not asked God to guide you in this matter, or you would have been glad to bring a sunbeam into a very lonely life.

"Katie scarcely knows her own mind yet," said her mother, with an encouraging nod, which made her daughter feel it was left to *her* to say "Yes" or "No."

Miss Garnett turned away and chatted gaily with Mrs. Bailey for awhile. As she rose to go, she put her grey-cottoned hand on Katherine's shoulder.

"Now, once for all, child; will you come? Your mother makes no difficulty, and says you can well be spared at home, and you will make an old woman very happy."

"Thank you, Miss Garnett. I should like it so much. But——"

The little old lady impatiently removed the caressing hand, and her mouth took an inflexible curve.

"I do not think you would suit me after all, Katherine. A girl who cannot say an honest 'Yes' or 'No' to a plain proposal would only be in my way."

So she had lost the chance. Poor Katherine! Tears filled her eyes as Miss Garnett energetically marched down the garden walk. She was so humiliated that even Harold's crushing remark at dinner-time—"Was your mind too small to be found, Lady Kate?" only elicited a pathetic smile, followed by a burst of tears. So unlike Katherine's usual behaviour was this, that the boy tried to make up for his unkind remark by a comfortable generality, "There, never mind; girls never know their own minds! They can't help it, poor things."

However, the next day Katherine found there were some who did. She heard that her greatest friend, Edith Aintree, had decided to accept Miss Garnett's generous offer, and was off to Italy the next week.

* * * * * *

"Roy is coming home! Roy is coming home!" Katherine's voice rose clear and shrill as she half sang, half shouted the news. "He has three weeks' leave, Harold! Isn't it splendid?"

"*Now* we shall see Royalty and Lady Kate always together," answered the younger brother, half grumblingly. "What *can* he see in you to be so fond of, *I* can't think!"

Katherine stopped the rough mouth with a kiss. She was so happy at the prospect of seeing the curly-haired young lieutenant that she felt in charity with all. This elder brother of hers, "Royal by name and right royal by nature," as she was often pleased to say, was never rude or cross to her, and so she could afford to be gracious to the unmannerly one. Besides, even Harold's remarks were but the thick veil over his real feelings. He was as unfeignedly fond of his pretty sister, as every brother ought to be; only he took delight in concealing his sentiments.

"Mr. Royal is coming home."

The news seemed to quicken even the servants' mental and physical capabilities. His room was furbished up with wonderful celerity. His favourite nook in the garden weeded; his "smokelorum" dusted and put to rights; his books arranged. "Royal is coming home." So the mother put on her best gown; Katherine donned her prettiest bib and tucker. Even Harold smoothed out his "Sunday-go-to-meeting tie." And he came, with his laughing, sunburnt face and long stride. Came—and took up "the little mother" in his strong young arms, imprinted a hearty kiss on Katherine's beaming face, pinched his brother's red cheeks, wrung his father's hand cordially, and then suddenly recollected he had a friend with him.

"Forgot to tell you he was coming, mother; but he is no end of a good fellow! Captain St. John—Mrs. Bailey, etc., etc."

The Captain proved a great acquisition, though a surprising contrast to his friend. Quiet-mannered and grave, he yet acted as no killjoy in the family circle. The deep eyes would light up as the little festivities devised for Royal turned up one after another. The moustached mouth often smiled tenderly as he saw the perfect sympathy between brother and sister. He was always ready for cricket, tennis, or boating, and, beneath it all, ran a quiet current of strong calm.

"Royalty and Lady Kate" (as Harold had long before nicknamed his elders) owed many a quiet moment to Captain St. John's manœuvres. He it was who carried off the family torment for a long hour's ride or longer afternoon's scramble. He who—even when he joined the two who had so much to talk about—never seemed in the way. And so, one day when he found Katherine alone, she was ready to listen to his warning.

"Miss Bailey," he said, turning to stroll up and down the garden path with her, "I am rather afraid for our bright young sub. I wish you would speak to Royal. He would take more from you than from any one else. I am much afraid he is in a fast set, and will get into trouble about money matters. More than that. He cannot escape moral pollution from the company I hear he frequents. Could you not warn him as to his intimacy with all the gay fellows of the regiment?"

"What should I say, Captain St. John?" Katherine looked up in alarm. "Roy is surely old enough to look after himself?"

"Old enough?—yes!—but he is thoughtless and merry! He does not think where his betting—and—and," Captain St. John hesitated, then continued, "gambling will lead him. Miss Bailey, speak to him. Tell him plainly I have warned you. He will be angry with me, but I must do what I think *right*. God knows, Royal is more to me than almost anybody. I have neither kith nor kin. But he would not take from *me* one half he would from you! His sister! His Lady Kate!"

There was a half-tremulous, wholly-tender inflection in the manly voice, and Katherine looked up hastily.

"I will do it, Captain St. John! if I can. It is so hard, though, to make up one's mind."

"Not when it is *right*, surely?" The Captain paused. "Tell him before we leave, Miss Bailey—as you value his welfare. *Now* there is hope of his being stopped—*soon*—"

He passed on in answer to a call from Harold, and Katherine was left alone. Could she speak to Royal?

All that day the struggle went on. At evening she had not decided, and they were to leave the next day!

"It is very hard," she thought half petulantly. "*I* can't speak to Roy! He will never like me afterwards."

And so the time went on. At one moment Captain St. John's words, "Not hard when it is *right*, surely?" made her call the young fellow aside, but then her heart failed her. She could not determine what to say. So the golden opportunity passed. Royal's chance of salvation, by his sister's influence, was over.

"Did you speak to him?" whispered Captain St. John, as he shook hands and said good-bye.

"I should have liked to, but I could not make up my mind."

Katherine looked down as she spoke, or she would have seen a wave of regret pass over the honest face.

"It is too late now!" he said sorrowfully. "I have done my best and failed," and a moment afterwards Royal and he were speeding to the station.

The young lieutenant wondered what made his companion so silent on their journey. He shrewdly suspected Katherine had something to do with it; but had too much delicacy to inquire. He little knew that Captain St. John was folding away the memory of the fair young girl with the possibility of what might have been.

"No," he decided that night with a pang, as he resigned a budding hope, "Lady Kate would never do for me. My wife must be no vacillating maiden. She must be able to make up her mind, and do what is right."

Royal's letters from that time were not what they once were. Stories of large parties, noisy gatherings, betting rings, money losses came gathering in. And when, a year afterwards, the *Gazette* announced "Lieutenant Bailey resigns his commission," none but Katherine and Captain

St. John knew that her influence might, perhaps, have prevented the catastrophe. Neither did she ever learn that her want of determination had lost her the love of one of the strongest and truest of men.

* * * * * *

Katherine Crawford—for she is Katherine Bailey no longer—sits with her yellow-haired little son on her knees. The towzled head is pressed against her arm, while, with a fretful wail, tiny Hal turns his face from the light. Katherine looks worried, and yet presses her boy lovingly and closely to her breast.

"Tell mother what is the matter, Harry." But the baby lips only pout, while the once chubby hand squeezes a puckered brow.

Hal is only just recovering from that most troublesome of diseases, scarlet fever, and, unlike his elder sister May (who trots about as sturdily as ever), seems to have lost all his energy since his illness.

"Don't rub them, darling!" murmurs his mother tenderly, as the clenched fist knuckles his red inflamed-looking eyes. "I will ask Dr. Browne to give you something to take the pain away."

And so she did, and a cooling lotion day by day was applied. The eyes grew no better, however, and one day after examining the bonnie blue orbs, Dr. Browne called the mother aside. "Mrs. Crawford," he said, earnestly, "I fear for your little boy's sight. An operation performed *at once* may save them, but it must be done before the film progresses any further. I will undertake the operation to-morrow, if you will?"

What wonder that the loving mother's heart shrank from the idea? What wonder that the quivering lips whispered, "It cannot be, Doctor. Tell me it is not true?"

The doctor gently took the trembling hand in his.

"My dear lady!" he answered; "the boy will not feel the pain, and it *may*—nay! in all human probability, it *will* save his sight. Send word to me in the morning, and I will be with you."

That night Katherine Crawford enjoyed no rest. Up and down her long bedroom she paced, restlessly and tearfully. The morning found her mind not made up.

"If only I had some one to decide for me," she moaned over and over again, sending a quick thought to the brave husband in Africa doing his duty. But no earthly help came, and alas! Katherine had got to learn to trust her weakness to all Divine strength.

"It must not be to-day. Give me time," she wrote to Dr. Browne, who impatiently, on the receipt of the note, tore it to shreds.

"The woman is sinful in her vacillation," he exclaimed; "but I can do nothing without her consent."

Weeks of constant fretfulness on little Hal's part passed. Weeks in which his mother renewed the bandages and bathed the poor eyes continually. Then she wrote, "Come, doctor, and I will try to make up my mind if you still think an operation necessary."

He came—with a frown on his generally kind face—took the little fellow on his knee, and gently raised the swollen, fallen lids. Abruptly he placed the child in his mother's arms, and, in the cruelty of suppressed excitement, whispered fiercely, "It is too late! The boy is blind."

Alas! poor mother! Alas! poor Lady Kate! With her tears falling on the sweet white face—with her hands convulsively clasping the little form to her breast.

"My darling! My darling!" she cried, sobbing loudly, and only the doctor's hand clasping her arm stopped her.

"You will make it worse for the child," he said huskily, and then silence ensued. "God help you, for I can't," he added.

Then, in the kindness of his heart, he tried to comfort Katherine by doubting if even the operation would have been successful. But she knew too well the truth.

"My fault—all my fault," she moaned, and, as the long days went on, more and more keenly she realised it. The baby foot might learn not to stumble. The silvery voice peal as merrily as before. But Katherine never felt the same.

On her knees she sought for strength, and born of her great sorrow, nourished by her constant reproach, a new determination sprang up. Gradually she learned to make up her mind. When a thing was *right*—however painful in its effects—she feared not to do it.

"That," says her husband now, as he sees the new-found resolutions toning her fair young face; "that sad time was my wife's salvation. A strong, true principle has taken the place of my Katherine's fault.

A FORCE AND A DELIGHT.

It is the natural desire of every woman to be beautiful, and many women could be much finer looking if they paid more attention to the laws of health. It is a sign of progress that women are realising every year that ill health or lack of physical power handicaps a woman in the race for development. Not many years ago lack of strength and refinement were identical in the minds of many women. To be able to walk, or ride, or make any physical exertion for any continued length of time, was thought to indicate a vulgarity or coarseness so evident as to limit intelligence. But a blessed change has come in the sentiment of women in this direction. Not long since a bright, inspiring Smith College girl said, "Tired? No; never. I consider it a disgrace to be tired, and a sin to be ill." And she lived up to her theory, using all her powers of mind and body, but using every precaution to keep them in perfect working order.

If women would only realise the inseparableness of health and beauty, and the value of nourishing food, regular habits, and bathing in producing both! An authority says on the subject of bathing:—

"Tepid water is preferable for every season of the year. For a full length bath a bag of bran will soften the water and make the skin deliciously smooth and fair; but let me here remark that no bath is perfect in its results without the long and brisk friction of hands or a coarse towel afterward. Friction not only stimulates circulation, but it makes the flesh firm and polished like Parian marble. It is sometimes astonishing to see the change made in an ugly skin by friction, and any lady who wishes to possess a healthful body, firm to the touch and fair to the eye, with the elasticity of youth well prolonged into age, must give willingly of her strength to the daily task of rubbing the body thoroughly."

And this rubbing gives the muscular exercise necessary for physical development, thus accomplishing both objects of the bath—health and beauty.—*Christian Union.*

The first virtue is to restrain the tongue. He approaches nearest to the gods who knows how to be silent, even though he is in the right.

HINTS ON GARDENING.

Geraniums.

As the summer begins to wane, we must look forward and prepare for the blossoms of another spring; and those who wish for flowers then must lose no time in propagating them before it is too late. Perhaps almost everyone who has any flowers at all possesses a geranium; these plants are so easily cultivated, and should bring to their possessors such glorious clusters of bloom during eight months of the year, that they are general favourites.

In variety they are endless, and every possible shade of scarlet, pink, deep crimson, and carmine is represented in this family of flowers, as well as pure white and many tints of salmon.

The double geraniums are very handsome, but do best indoors; those with coloured leaves make a charming variety, but are more difficult to grow than the old scarlet, white, and pink geraniums. Having selected a plant which has grown well through the summer, it should be cut down now (*i.e.*, at the beginning of September), and the pieces made into slips and cuttings, either of which will grow easily.

The best slips will be found low down on the stem of a vigorous geranium, and will need little preparation, except the removal of a leaf or two near the slipped part, *i.e.*, that little "heel" which is attached to the small branch on removal from the parent stem. Larger branches may be cut into bits about six or eight inches long, and should have their lower leaves removed with a pair of scissors or a sharp knife. All slips must be cleanly cut, just below a strong eye, or shoot; any bruise or untidiness in cutting will probably cause the cutting to rot, instead of making roots.

Those who have a garden will do best to grow their geranium slips in the open ground. A small bed should be prepared in a sheltered situation; but fresh manure must not be added to the soil, which should be lightened with a little sand, if necessary. Insert the cuttings at a distance of six inches from each other, and do not water them until the next day. Remember that their great danger at this stage is *damp;* the sap in the cutting will be sufficient nourishment for it for some hours, and it is necessary to form a hard dry cicatrice over the wound made by the knife. To ensure this, some people make their cuttings in the morning and allow them to lie, in a shady place, till evening; and where this is practicable it is a good plan.

When grown out of doors, the cuttings will not require more than one watering, unless the weather be unusually hot and dry; the rain and heavy dews of September will commonly supply them with all the damp they need, and they can be left alone until the middle or end of October, when they should be potted separately in thumb-pots.

Those who grow their flowers indoors may place their cuttings at once in small pots, or at intervals of four inches round the edge of a seed-pan, leaving the soil lower in the middle of the pan, and draining it well with crocks and wood-ashes.

Keep the little plants out of the frost, but give them all the air and sun possible. As soon as they begin to move (*i.e.*, to throw out fresh leaves) in the spring, shift them to a pot of the next size, giving richer soil, and gradually increasing their supply of water; thus treated, they will quickly form fine plants, and throw out splendid heads of bloom, which, with proper support, should not fail until the following autumn or winter.

Whenever a plant has filled its pot with roots, it must have more nourishment given by either of the three following ways, *viz.*, re-potting, top-dressing, or liquid manuring. It is inconvenient to have very large pots to handle, therefore avoid the first, if possible, especially as geraniums bloom best when their roots are rather tightly packed. To top-dress them, remove with a pointed stick all the surface soil as far down as possible without disturbing the roots, and fill the pot up with rich new soil, which should be made of rotten turf, with a little old stable manure and leaf-mould, if available; a small quantity of silver sand being added.

Those who wish their pot-flowers to prosper should take pains to collect a few pieces of turf, cut about six inches deep, and store them in a box in a dry corner, for about three months, till the roots of the grass are dead, then chop them up with a spade on the ground, and pull the larger bits abroad with the hands. This turf mould is the best soil for most pot-plants, and will need very little manure and sand mixed with it. Geraniums may, however, be grown in almost any soil, if it be light enough for the roots to penetrate, and liquid manure be supplied. The liquid manure used out of doors, which is made by adding water and a little lime to fowl's droppings or stable manure, is not suitable for a dwelling-room, as the smell is both unpleasant and unhealthy. Soot-water is a very valuable manure, and soot can be easily procured by brushing down a chimney, after having placed a spread newspaper in the empty grate.

Fill a coarse canvas bag with soot, tie it up and soak it in a pan of water, pressing the bag occasionally as it lies in the water. Use only the water surrounding the bag of soot, and dilute this considerably before giving it to the plant. All liquid manure should be used very thin and clear, as it will then reach the roots of the plant, and not clog the surface of the soil. It may be given twice a week to plants in full flower, and will support them well. Soapsuds (without washing powder or soda) also makes good manure, and may be alternated with the soot water.

All failing leaves must be picked off, and the plants kept dry throughout the winter, only enough water to keep them alive being supplied to them. If they have plenty of air and all the sunshine possible, they will not suffer from the mustiness which is their chief danger during the cold months.

Old plants, if cut back into shape early in March, will make handsome plants by June, and be covered with blossoms. The cuttings may be inserted in boxes or pots full of soil, and will grow quickly in the spring, though the autumn plants will flower more abundantly.

I. L. Richmond.

MODERN MIRACLES.

A True Story.

BY MRS. G. E. MORTON.

There is scarcely any subject on which every one is unanimously agreed; and I know of but one thing which all the world would unhesitatingly confess that they wish to possess. Wealth is ardently desired by some, but not by all; and so with all other great gifts. But every man, woman, and child on this earth of ours seeks for *happiness; "and few there be that find it."*

The true reason of the failure of the many is, that the only road to deep, solid, lasting happiness is through the strait gate, and along the narrow way that leads to everlasting life (Matt. vii. 14); and *so few* care to take that way! It is generally considered a dull and dismal road; and this most mistaken idea concerning it is propagated by our great enemy to further his own work of luring men to destruction, by enticing them to walk on the broad path of danger and sin.

It needs no *words* to prove the impossibility of any amount of earthly success to ensure happiness. Do we not continually see those who seem to have all they want of earthly good restless and miserable? with an undefined craving after something better—something that will *last*—something that death cannot touch, or rob them of? This indescribable feeling of longing and unrest is not experienced by those who have turned their faces heavenwards; for those who

can truly say, "The Lord is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever" (Ps. lxxiii. 26), have within them that "peace of God which passeth all understanding"—even when worldly prospects seem most dark and unpromising. And when this life is over they know they have "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" for them (1 Peter i. 4). On the other hand, where the blessing of God is not, there will assuredly be a bitter drop in every cup of joy—a canker in the bud of every flower—a worm at the root of every spreading gourd.

"All that Thou blessest turns to good,
And unblest good to ill;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be Thy sweet will."

Is it not a stupendous miracle, when God's grace can so fill a poor human heart as to make it desire nothing so much as His glory, because it loves Him, and loves His "sweet will"?

One day a maid in attendance upon her mistress said, "Do you know, ma'am, I have to-day been to visit the happiest woman I have ever seen in my life. She is very poor and is nearly blind, and has been on her back for twenty-five years from paralysis; but she is intensely happy."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the lady; "paralysed for twenty-five years, and yet so happy? It cannot be."

"Indeed, ma'am, it is true," persisted the maid. "She says herself that she is the happiest woman in the world; and you have only got to look at her to see that she is speaking the truth."

The lady was an earnest Christian, and a devoted worker in God's vineyard, and therefore one who enjoyed constant opportunities of seeing the wonders that grace can accomplish, when God's Holy Spirit takes possession of a heart; yet even she doubted whether this could be true, and thought that probably her maid had mistaken a temporary cheerfulness for a permanent joy. But, like Rhoda, "she constantly affirmed that it was even so"; and begged her mistress to go and see for herself whether she had not faithfully described the paralysed woman's state of mind.

This Mrs. B. resolved to do. And not many days had elapsed before she was on her way to the little cottage where lay "the Lord's prisoner."

"I will first go up quietly to her room by myself," Mrs. B. said to her daughter, who accompanied her. "I should like to see her without her knowing it; for I shall be able to judge at once, from her face, if she is as happy as they say."

Softly, noiselessly, she ascended the stair, and stood at the half-open door where the lonely woman was lying. *Lonely*, did I say? Ah, no, not that. *The Lord was there!* One glance at the beaming face, one look into the kindling eyes, showed in a moment the secret and the well-spring of her joy. She "endured, as seeing Him who is invisible" (Heb. xi. 27), and was not only "in subjection to the Father of spirits," but was also in constant and intimate communion with Him. The expression of her countenance was a powerful sermon in itself; and, touched by what she read there, Mrs. B. approached the bed. Bending over her, that the failing eyes which could scarcely distinguish earthly objects might rest upon her, she said—

"I have been told that you are one of the happiest women living, and I have come to see if it is true."

Bright as the face had been before, it now became perfectly radiant.

"Oh, it *is* true!" she exclaimed. "I am the happiest woman in the world. God is so good to me, and He never leaves me. He is with me night and day. I would not change places with any one on this earth. No, ma'am, I would not change places even with *you* (and I know now who you are), for I can see my Lord as you *cannot* see Him—though you are a Christian lady. *You* see earthly things, and they must somehow come between. I have only God, but having Him, I want nothing more. He is *all* I need."

Very sweet was the intercourse between those two, as they spoke of Him in whom their souls delighted; and when at last Mrs. B. rose to leave, the sick woman said—

"I think I shall not be here much longer, and I do not suppose I shall ever see you again on earth, but I want you to do one thing for me. I want you to tell everybody that the happiest woman you have ever seen is one who was paralysed, and had lain on her back for twenty-five years. I can do no work for God, but I can let others know what He has been to me. I have nothing else—only Him—but I would not change places with a living soul, because He is so near to me, and He has made me so very, very happy."

Here, indeed, was a foretaste of heaven; and was it not a miracle?

Some time after this, a military officer, young, full of energy and health and spirits, went out one day to bathe. Life had smiled upon him. He had an abundance of this world's goods. Everything had prospered with him, and he would have asked nothing better for himself than a continuance of the "good things" that he enjoyed. On this particular day he had gone out with the intention of having a refreshing bathe and swim; but he miscalculated the depth of the water, and did not know that the spot he had chosen was too shallow for taking a "header"; therefore, plunging fearlessly in, his head came in violent contact with the ground, and in an instant he was paralysed! Injury to the brain and spine (producing paralysis) had struck him down, reducing him in a moment from a state of manly health and vigour to a condition of helplessness as absolute and complete as that of a new-born infant. The unfortunate man would have found there a watery grave, but that his fatal leap had been witnessed by some people who now rushed forward to rescue him, and to bear him—with every mark of deep and solemn feeling and sympathy—to the hospital.

When the poor sufferer realised the full extent of the injury he had sustained, his agony of mind was terrible, and, indeed, bordered upon madness. He cursed his misfortune—and cursed the action of those who drew him from the water. "Why did they not let him drown? What use was life to him now? a helpless log as he was. Why didn't they let him die? He *wished* he was dead." And so the wretched man raved, in his misery and despair; and no one could soothe him, for he would listen to none.

It happened that Mrs. B. was one of the visitors at that hospital, and she was told of this sad case, and entreated to try if she could not say something to bring him peace and comfort. She promised to do her best, but she plainly saw that he was in no state, at that time, to be directly dealt with. She determined, however, to try indirect means to win him.

Walking slowly down the ward in which he lay (on her way to visit another patient), she simply said, very quietly and very impressively, as she passed the officer's bed, "The happiest person I ever saw in my life was a woman who was completely paralysed, and who had lain on her back for twenty-five years." She did not add another word, but passed on; and he made no sign that he had heard.

Another day she went to the hospital, and again, on passing his bed, repeated the same words without comment: "The happiest person I ever saw in my life was a woman who was

completely paralysed, and who had lain on her back for twenty-five years."

Still there was no sign or movement, and she passed on.

A third day Mrs. B. was there, and once more she said, just in the same manner, "The happiest person I ever saw in my life was a woman who was completely paralysed, and who had lain on her back for twenty-five years."

But *this* time the officer was watching her, and when she had finished speaking, he said, "This is the third time you have repeated those same words. Who was that woman? Tell me about her."

Thankful for, and rejoicing at, this first token of an awakening interest in something beyond his own trying circumstances, Mrs. B. sat beside the weary sufferer, while, with a wisdom born of a long experience in dealing with souls, she told the story without any remarks of her own, letting the simple account convey its own teaching, and then quietly turned away to visit another patient.

When she next appeared in that ward, it was evident that the officer was eagerly on the look-out for her; and as soon as she drew near, his first words were, "Tell me about that woman again."

With deepened interest he listened to the strange and touching story. And now Mrs. B. saw that the time had come—for which she had so earnestly prayed—when he would not refuse to listen to God's message of love and offer of life, but would "suffer the word of exhortation." All opposition to it had vanished.

About this time some one (he never knew who) slipped a text—a very precious text—over the screen which was by the side of his bed: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). The text had a string attached to it, by which it had been fastened to the screen on the other side. So there hung continually before him the blessed assurance of God's love, in the Saviour's own words. And, little by little, *light* broke in upon his soul, with the natural consequence that *life* and *happiness* grew there also! He became a changed man, for, as he told Mrs. B., "the text and the story had done their work." To say that he was perfectly contented with his lot does not express one-half the truth. He thanked God for what had befallen him, and acknowledged that it was the best thing that could possibly have happened to him, and he would not have things different if he could. And when Mrs. B., before going abroad, called to take leave of him, he said to her—

"When you tell the story of the happiest woman in the world, tell *my* story also; and say that you knew another paralytic who, though he had lost all that he had most valued on earth, yet, having found Christ, he had found far greater happiness than he had ever known before."

Soon afterwards he died, rejoicing. It was no leap in the dark, as when he plunged into the shallow water, ignorant of its depth and not knowing what was below the surface. He knew that the plunge into eternity would safely launch him on the broad fathomless ocean of God's love. He knew, also, whom he would meet on the other shore—"not a stranger" (Job xix. 27, margin), but—One who had loved him and died for him, and saved and sanctified him; One for whom he had never cared when all went well with him, but whom he had learned to love when drawn aside from the world by what the "world" would call *an accident.*

So, he fell asleep in Jesus.

Surely on hearing such histories as these we must exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" (Num. xxiii. 23). What miracles of love and mercy! It is only "for our profit" that He sends us trials and sorrows, "that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. xii. 10, 11). Submission to God's will, and trust in His love, can take all bitterness from sorrow, and (as we have seen) can bring a flood of ineffable happiness into the soul. But deep, true, lasting happiness is, as I have said before, *only* found by those who are walking in the narrow way that leads to everlasting life.

"HOME-SICK."

(We are indebted to Dr. S. Wells Williams for this delightful rendering of an ancient Chinese poem.)

"'Twas night—the tired soldiers were peacefully sleeping;
The low hum of voices was hushed in repose;
The sentries, in silence, a strict watch were keeping
'Gainst surprise or a sudden attack of their foes;

"When a low mellow note on the night air came stealing;
So soothingly over the senses it fell—
So touchingly sweet—so soft and appealing—
Like the musical notes of an aërial bell.

"The sleepers arouse, and with beating hearts listen;
In their dreams they had heard that weird music before;
It touches each heart;—with tears their eyes glisten;
For it tells them of those they may never see more.

"Bright visions of home through their mem'ries came thronging,
Panorama-like passing in front of their view;
They were *home-sick;*—no power could withstand that strange longing;
The longer they listen'd, the more home-sick they grew.

"Each looked at the other; but no word was spoken—
The music insensibly leading them on.
They must return home. Ere the daylight had broken,
The enemy looked, and behold! they were gone.

"There's a magic in music—a witchery in it,
Indescribable either with tongue or with pen;
The flute of Chang Liang, in one little minute,
Had stolen the courage of eight thousand men."

DRESS AND DRESSMAKING.

SEPTEMBER is the month of all others that sees us trying to lengthen the summer out as much as possible. Mornings and evenings draw in all too quickly, but the sun is hot and the gardens still gay, tennis is possible, and holidays by no means over, since all must take their turn, and it is impossible for every one to get away at the same time. White frocks are still wearable, especially white woollens, such as delaines and nun's veilings, or the cream serges that come in for so many purposes; but it is well to be prepared for chill October, and to have warm things in readiness for sudden change of weather.

There are a good many radical changes in dressmaking just now. The reign of the high sleeves is over, and sloping shoulders are once more pronounced graceful. This simplifies the work very much, for unless the fulness is put precisely in the right place the sleeves do not look well. Puffs at the tops of the sleeves, however, are much worn, and are very easy to manage, and, moreover, offer a very good way of renovating an old dress without putting in those patches on the under side of the sleeve which show so plainly. Our illustration gives a kind of modified sailor-dress, suitable for being made up in navy blue and cream serge, or a conjunction of navy blue and a striped blue and white, or even pink and white flannel or cashmere. The skirt is mounted in accordion pleats, and the drapery and bodice are very becoming indeed when made of cream serge, with band, collar, cuffs, and waistband of dark blue, of which latter the skirt is also made. It is often desirable for a girl who may be paying a country visit, or going to the seaside at the end of the summer, to have a new dress of this kind, and if carefully kept it is in admirable condition for the following summer. The secret of keeping it through the winter is either to hang it up, *not* turned inside out, but enveloped in a calico wrapper; or, if this cannot be managed without crushing, on account of other and heavier clothes being hung in the same cupboard, it should be folded up right side out, placed in a large cardboard box, covered with paper, and safely shut up. It is the greatest mistake to put a dress that has to be kept for another season into a box or drawer where other things will be heaped upon it.

The entire absence of steel or pad makes skirts look very flat and plain at the back, but there are dressmakers who contrive to remedy it by judicious management. Perhaps the easiest way for an amateur who is making a round-waisted bodice with the skirt sewn to it is to arrange her pleats or gathers without the back breadth, or possibly the back breadth and the halves of those next to it on either side may be untouched. When all the rest is sewn on, and only a small space left behind, gather the back breadth finely and closely, and sew it on to a narrow band, and put two or three hooks on it, making corresponding loops or sewing eyes on to the bodice. This has the effect of standing out a little, and being movable it does not get too easily flattened. It is, however, an arrangement only possible when a waistband or sash is worn.

The fronts of dresses for evening wear are very much made of grenadine, lace, or any thin material gathered on both sides and sewn rather full into a two-inch lace insertion lined with a coloured ribbon. It is a capital way of renewing a silk or satin dress, the front widths of which may have been injured or lost their freshness; but it requires time. Sleeves for this kind of dress are generally full, gathered before they are sewn in at the armhole, and confined just below the elbow with a band, while another band comes at the wrist. Ribbon bows are perched on each shoulder, and where there are two colours or shades in the dress, the bows are also of two shades to match.

Flounces are coming in, and are always made the selvedge way of the stuff, and often the top one is headed with fringe.

Black lace bonnets are all the rage in Paris, relieved by bright bows or flowers, and when the latter are used the preference is given to red, or white, or parti-coloured camellias. These flowers are not the easiest to make in artificials, and those who have them at command—and camellias are tolerably hardy and easy to grow, if you only understand them—pin in a real blossom with its glossy green leaves; and if removed and put in water it will last several days.

A new kind of tucker has made its appearance. It has been made for the last two years, but at last fashion has seized on it and brought it into favour. In black it is very good, but most people look best with something white at throat and wrists. Thread a goodly quantity of beads, *not* bugles, on any silk or wool, and cast on six stitches, using rather fine needles. Good firm, plain knitting alone is required, but at the beginning of every other row push forward six or eight beads, and thus form a succession of loops that lie close together. A milky white or opal bead looks best, and the knitting can be sewn into the dress like any other tucker.

The flat pattern of bodice and drapery can be had by enclosing 1*s. in stamps to "M. L.," at the office of the "Mothers' Companion."*